

Third was regarded. But the young as well as the old would be impressed with the fact that there had been only one king of Great Britain and Ireland during sixty years. The slightest historical knowledge would attest that these sixty years would be for ever memorable as an era of vast change and tremendous struggle, in which all that constituted the greatness and glory of our country might have been overwhelmed if the nation had not been heart-whole. The old king who was gone had plunged the country into difficulty and danger by his unyielding will at one period; but he had well sustained the national spirit by the same quality of mind during another crisis of greater peril. He had passed away, and his people looked back with reverence upon his private virtues, and were willing to forget his kingly faults.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

English Literature in the three latter decades of the reign of George III.—The Poets: Cowper.—Crabbe.—Burns.—Darwin.—Wordsworth.—Southey.—Coleridge.—Scott.—Byron.—Shelley.—Keats.—Narrative character of Poetry.—Campbell.—Rogers.—Leigh Hunt.—Moore.—Crabbe's latter delineations of manners.—More evangelical spirit in the body of the people.—Theological Literature.—Writers for the Stage.—The Novelists.—Godwin.—Holcroft.—Dr. Moore.—Burney.—Scott; the Waverley Novels.—The Edinburgh Review.—The Quarterly Review.—Blackwood's Magazine.—Essayists.—Wilson.—Lamb.—Hazlitt.—Leigh Hunt.—De Quincey.—Political Economists.—Scientific Discovery.—Herschel.—Davy.—Dalton.—Wollaston.—Travellers.—Two great mechanical inventions of the Steam-boat and the Printing Machine.—Chronological Table of British Writers.

THE termination of a reign, even under the circumstances which rendered the change of sovereignty from George the Third to George the Fourth merely nominal, nevertheless offers a fit resting place, at which we may pause in the narrative of public events, and look back upon matters which belong as essentially to the life of a people as their political condition.

The great outburst of the French Revolution has always been associated with the Literature which preceded it. This Literature, like that of every other period in which Literature has a marked distinctive character, was the reflection of the thoughts that were seething in the minds of men. It took the form of a fanatical and intolerant irreligion. It gave expression to the belief that existing principles and forms of government were ill-adapted to promote the welfare of the governed, and that worn-out institutions must be replaced by others endowed with a new vitality. The whole spirit of political opposition excited by the corruption of the government, not being able to find a vent in public affairs, had taken refuge in Literature. As irreligion in France had become a general passion, the writers, one and all, stimulated the prevailing unbelief in Christianity, under the false conviction that political society and religious society were regulated by analogous laws.\* The revolutionary doctrines thus propagated by the most subtle and the most eloquent of writers very largely influenced, if they did not produce, the great convulsion upon which Europe looked with fear and wonder.

\* See De Tocqueville, "Society in France before the Revolution," chap. xiv.

The religious liberty of Protestantism, and the political liberty of representative government, however impaired and inefficient, as many held, whilst they permitted the extremest differences of opinion, saved England from the excesses which saw no remedy for the canker of institutions but the destruction of the institutions themselves. English Literature, reflecting the general public opinion, received but a very feeble infusion of the destructive force that had rent the French people and the French Church and State asunder. Yet such an upheaving of the whole crust of society; such an armed contest as succeeded between republican licence and monarchical despotism; such a war into which we were plunged, finally to become a struggle for national existence, producing a real heroic time, and stirring up depths of thought which had been stagnant during a long period of tranquillity, or of mere party agitation,—these circumstances, unprecedented in their conjunction, had a manifest effect upon our Literature.

"Oh, not alone when life flows still do truth  
And power emerge."\*

A new power and a wider truth were especially marked in the highest expression of ideas, that of Poetry. This outpouring of verse constitutes, in itself, a literary era as remarkable as that of the age of Elizabeth. During the latter three of the six decades of the reign of George the Third, there had been also a vast increase of the number of readers in our country, with a correspondent extension of periodical writing—that form of literature which is the surest indication of a larger public to be addressed. If we adequately bear in mind the expansion of thought that was coincident with the great events of this remarkable period, and trace also the rapid growth of an influential body of readers beyond the narrow circles of the learned and the fashionable, to whom nearly all writers had addressed themselves in the first three decades of this reign, we may find two links by which to connect the rapid and imperfect notices which we now propose to offer, without any attempt at minute criticism, of what is generically termed The Press.

About the time when Samuel Johnson died,† there appeared a writer who suddenly emerged from a provincial life of sickness and seclusion, after having passed his fiftieth year, to become "the most popular poet of his generation."‡ William Cowper was the precursor of the poetical school that sprang up amidst the

\* Browning—"Paracelsus," l.

† See *Ante*, vol. vi. chap. xxi.

‡ Southey, *Life of Cowper* in *Collected Works*, chap. i.

excitement of the French Revolution. He had many distinctive qualities essentially different from the leaders of that school. He was unfamiliar with German modes of thought, and German models of composition. With the exception of one humorous poem, his writings did not assume the narrative form, which was so marked a characteristic of the next period. His first volume, published in 1784, contained the didactic poems, which may almost be termed satires of Table Talk, The Progress of Error, Truth, Expostulation, Hope, Charity, Conversation, Retirement. Cowper's poetical talents were known to his intimate friends, and he had previously published the *Olney Hymns*. But when Mrs. Unwin urged upon him, as an employment that might divert him from thoughts under which his mental powers too often broke down, to produce a work of magnitude, she little expected that some six thousand lines would have been written in a time scarcely exceeding three months. The peculiar character of this first volume was scarcely calculated to win for it a sudden popularity. It was not till after the publication of his second volume, in 1785, containing *The Task*, that the strong sense, the high morality, the earnest piety, the love of nature, the depth of the home affections, which characterize these poems, began to be fully recognized and duly appreciated. The conventionalities of most of the poets who had preceded Cowper were to be cast aside and forgotten in this manifestation of the power of earnestness and simplicity. The popularity which, with some persons, must have been at first retarded by the strong religious feeling of these poems, was ultimately increased, in what has been denominated "the great religious movement of the end of the last century."

Cowper died in 1800; but as a painter of manners he represents the fashions and classes before the French Revolution. Some of the satire belongs to no especial generation. The waste of time in cards and dice; the rank debauch, which suits Clodio's filthy taste, who can "drink five bottles, and bilk the score"—Gorgonius the glutton, "abdominous and wan"—these are general portraits. The novelists

"Whose corresponding misses filled the ream  
With sentimental frippery and dream,"

will possibly never be extinct. The petit maître parson in Cowper's admirable portraiture is a successor of the gross Trulliber of a former age. Fielding probably never saw the preacher who brings forth the pocket mirror in the pulpit, or with opera-glass watches the slow retiring fair. He might have seen the court chaplain

"Frequent in Park, with lady at his side."

But the churchmen generally of his time were marked by the slovenly neglect and rustic coarseness, which Cowper preferred to the affectation of the clerical coxcomb of his satire. The political profligacy of those times was never more strongly painted than in the picture of the country gentleman, who, having expended his wealth in gaming or building, burns to serve his country, and receives the price of his vote from ministerial grace or private patronage. The venal senator, and the remorseless highwayman, each belong to those good old times:—

"Oh, innocent! compared with arts like these,  
Crape and cock'd pistol, and the whistling ball  
Sent through the traveller's temples!"

In those days public corruption and private immorality filled the thinking with apprehension:—

"'Tis therefore, sober and good men are sad  
For England's glory, seeing it wax pale  
And sickly, while her champions wear their hearts  
So loose to private duty, that no brain  
Healthful and undisturb'd by factious fumes,  
Can dream them trusty to the general weal."

Cowper believed that the public men of his time had grown degenerate—"the age of virtuous politics is past."

In such a brief view of literary progress as we are now attempting to give, it appears to us important to divide our subject into two periods of very moderate extent. In his great work on the Literature of Europe, Mr. Hallam gives the leading writers in various periods of half a century each. Although such a division has the apparent inconvenience of making a somewhat too distinct line of separation in the works of the same author (as in the case of Shakespere, who wrote at the end of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th), it is far more satisfactory than the plan pursued by an eminent historian of our own time. It is somewhat embarrassing to our chronological notions when we find Rogers and Tennyson in the same chapter of poets, Sharon Turner and Macaulay of historians, and Miss Edgeworth and Thackeray, of novelists.\* The convenience, if not the necessity, of adopting more manageable eras, and even of dividing in some cases the productions of one man into two eras, may be estimated by reference to the cases of Rogers and Crabbe. The author of the "Pleasures of Memory" published his "Ode to Superstition, and other Poems," in 1786. Crabbe's early poems, "The Library," "The Village," and "The Newspaper," appeared from 1781 to

\* So in Allison, "Europe from the fall of Napoleon," vol. i. chap. 5.

1784. The "Italy" of Rogers did not appear till 1822; Crabbe's "Tales of the Hall" appeared in 1819. In their early career, Rogers and Crabbe belonged to the generation of Cowper and Burns; in their latter period they belonged to the same age as Byron and Moore.

Crabbe, more than any other poet of either of the periods to which he belongs, is a painter of manners. It has been observed by a critic of no common order, that "with all its originality, the poetical genius of Crabbe was acted upon and changed by the growth of new tastes and a new spirit in the times through which he lived. . . . As he lived, indeed, in two eras, so he wrote in two styles."\* His early poems, which are essentially didactic, contain little of the poetical element which is to be found in the strong and impassioned narrative of his later years. "The Library" and "The Newspaper" necessarily deal with the subjects of our own present chapter.

The age of great books was gone,—the age when an author wrote his one folio, bepraised by poetic friends; when the ponderous gift was accepted by princes; and when

"Ladies read the work they could not lift."

The age of abstracts, and abridgments, and pamphlets was come,—the age of "a folio number once a week." In "The Library" the "Ancient worthies of Romance" are in disgrace; the giants, the knights and the magicians are gone. The Poet accurately describes the quality of the fiction which had succeeded to the "brood of old Romance." The novels of the Sentimental School were in fashion, as well as the Sentimental Comedy. These mawkish productions were "stories of repentant rakes wooing humble nymphs;" or of "virtue going to midnight masquerade on purpose to be tried;" or, the letters of the tender Delia to the sympathizing Lucinda. Crabbe's novel-reading experience is also given as a reminiscence of his later period. "Wanderings of the Heart;" "Confessions of a Nun;" "Tales of Winters, Summers, Springs, at Bath and Brighton," in which "all was love and flight to Gretna Green;" these were the staple of the Circulating Libraries, then recently called into existence.

"The Newspaper" describes that great province of the realms of print as it existed four or five years before the French Revolution. At the date of Crabbe's poem, there were seventy-nine newspapers published in Great Britain and Ireland. Seven years before, there were seventeen in London, of which seven were daily, and one of once a week. The name of Sunday paper was es-

\* "History of English Literature," by George L. Craik, LL.D., 1861, vol. ii. p. 485.

chewed till "Johnson's Sunday Monitor" appeared, which Crabbe not unjustly satirizes for "the moral essays on his front, and carnal business in the rear." Flourishing with morning papers and evening papers, there were papers of thrice a week and twice a week. Crabbe gives the titles of some members of the literature which he holds in contempt as "those vapid sheets,"—Ledgers, Chronicles, Posts, Heralds. One paper, which appeared a year after his poem, "The Daily Universal Register," is remarkable as having been printed and published by John Walter, Printing House Square. The name of that journal, in 1788, was changed to "The Times." Crabbe had no taste for newspapers. In their politics they were "fickle and false;" they were "the poisoned springs from learning's fountain;" "blind guides," "anonymous slanderers." The newspaper editors were "mutual thieves from each brother's hoard;" "what you read in one you read through all."

"Their runners ramble day and night,  
To drag each lurking deed to open light;  
For daily bread the dirty trade they ply,  
Coin their fresh tales, and live upon the lie."

Some of this satire was no doubt poetical exaggeration; but at that period newspapers had no high character to sustain. The government dreaded and despised them; they were in perpetual conflict with the Parliament about privilege; their contributors were ill-paid; their proprietors and editors had little social respect. How great has been the change! It was during the war that newspapers, such as the Morning Chronicle, became valuable properties. James Perry, the proprietor of that paper, was originally a reporter at a guinea a-week. A payment of this amount for his weekly services was refused by one whose presumption was thus described by one of the most energetic of the newspaper producers:—"We hear much of purse-proud insolence, but poets can sometimes be insolent on the conscious power of talent, as well as vulgar upstarts can be on the conscious power of purse. . . . It would surely have been a more honourable employment than that of an excise-gauger." We turn from the "base ephemera" of past journalism to Robert Burns "the excise-gauger," the greatest name in that era of our literature that immediately preceded the French Revolution.

From the first publication in 1786 of a volume of Poems, chiefly in the Scottish dialect, by Robert Burns, which was printed in the town of Kilmarnock, Scotland felt that a great spirit had arisen to shed a new lustre on the popular language and literature. The immediate and wide-spreading reputation of Burns was produced

by something much higher than the wonderment that an unlettered ploughman should have been able to produce verses not only of such commanding strength, but of such unlaboured refinement. The Scottish dialect which, to a certain extent, was almost obsolete for the purposes of literature, became, in the hands of this peasant, the vehicle of thoughts and descriptions which, whether impassioned or humorous, tender or satirical, received a new charm from the simplicity of the language whose ordinary use was vulgarized by the illiterate. Burns had not the creative power of the highest order of poets; but in describing his own emotions with a warmth equal to the energy with which he plunged into his loves or friendships; in delineating with the frankest unreserve the errors from which his manly sense and his natural veneration for what is of good report could not preserve him; in painting with the most admirable truth the appearances of nature or the social characteristics which presented themselves to his observation,—few poets have approached him. In his occasional impurities of thought and diction, which were the outbreak of a reckless levity, we always see a noble nature beneath the display of the wildest licence. The mode in which Burns "unlocked his heart" has nothing in it of that inordinate self-love which exhibits itself in touches of glaring vanity or affected modesty, each intended to challenge admiration. In his manly pride there is no peevish misanthropy. In his violations of decorum there is no desire to make proselytes to immorality. The egotism of Burns may be compared with the egotism of the most popular English poet of the succeeding generation. In the morbid introspection and the capricious hatreds of him who "woke one morning and found himself famous," we look in vain for the innate nobleness of character of the rustic, who, having gone from his plough to become the spoiled child of Edinburgh society, fell afterwards into habits of intemperance, and yet, in the grossest errors of his life, never exhibited a mean spirit. What Burns produced under all the disadvantages of imperfect education, of continuous labour, of uncongenial employment, of corrupting society, made him emphatically the national poet of Scotland in the twelve years which were allotted to his life after his first publication. It has been affirmed—and we are not disposed to question the truth of the opinion—that the influence of Burns upon the popular mind of Scotland has been all for good, enlarging, elevating, and refining the national heart, as well as awakening it. The tendency of some things, both in the character of the people and their peculiar institutions, required such a check or counter-action as was supplied by this frank, generous, reckless poetry.\*

\* Craik, "English Literature," vol. ii. p. 424.

Whilst Scotland is producing her Burns, whose inspiration was the bracing air of his own rivers and hills, and whose imagery was derived from the living or inanimate nature around him, England has her Darwin, who deemed it the office of a poet to penetrate beneath the surface of natural appearances, and to exhibit the mysteries of physiology in sonorous rhyme. The physician of Derby is almost forgotten. "The Loves of the Plants" are less popularly known than Canning's imitation, "The Loves of the Triangles." The attempt of Darwin to marry Science to Poetry was the mistake of a man of real talent and knowledge. The material spirit of his age pressed heavily upon him. The applications of scientific discovery to the great works of industry filled his fancy with incongruous imagery. He saw in Physics a world of grandeur and beauty not yet appropriated by Imagination; and he contrived that unnatural alliance of Fact and Fiction which, however admired in his own day, has made his analogies and similes now appear simply ludicrous. The fantastic machinery by which he attempts to connect the laws of vegetable and animal life, and the operations of art, with the presence of invisible beings, is to make the sylphs, which hovered round Pope's Belinda in their tricky beauty, very poor substitutes, in Darwin's hard unrealities, for human interests. Poetry has better materials to work upon, even in the mortal toilers by the side of the steam-engine, than the "Nymphs," who "in simmering cauldrons played." Darwin is poetical when he becomes prophetic:

"Soon shall thy arm, unconquered Steam, afar  
Drag the slow barge, or drive the rapid car."

The prophecy is accomplished. But steam has another work to do:

"Or, on wide waving wings expanded bear  
The flying chariot through the fields of air."

The specific levity of air, he explains, being too great for the support of great burdens by balloons, "there seems no probable method of flying conveniently, but by the powers of steam, or some other explosive material, which another half century may probably discover." The aerial journey in the steam-car is to be not only safe but joyous; there will probably be an intended emigration to the moon, when

"Fair crews triumphant, leaning from above,  
Shall wave their fluttering kerchiefs as they move."

A poetical revolution was at hand. A little before the beginning of the convulsions of France, and during the first year or two of the war, there was a swarm of gaudy insects fluttering in the

sunshine of fashion, whose painted wings, bearing them from flower to flower, were more admired than the "ample pinion" of the true Poet. This school, called Della Cruscan, originated with an English coterie at Florence. The sonnets, canzonets, elegies, epigrams, epistles of the Anna Matildas, Laura-Marias, Orlandos, Cesarios, were long poured out unceasingly. William Gifford, who destroyed the tribe by his "Baviad" and his "Mæviad," says "the epidemic malady was spreading from fool to fool;" and "from one end of the kingdom to another all was nonsense and Della Crusca." Gifford not improperly lauds the work which he had done in clearing the gardens of the Hesperides from this deadly blight. "Pope and Milton resumed their superiority." He might have added that he did something to make room for another school,—for Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey. In spite of the "This will never do" of the great northern critic, the Lake School, so called, which this illustrious trio founded, has survived, and will survive.

If the estimates of writers by their contemporaries are not always true, they are at least curious as illustrations of the prevailing taste. In 1809 there appeared a satire, by an anonymous author, entitled "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers." Some of this early production of Lord Byron is personal spite, and much is false criticism. In after years he suppressed the poem, having moderated his anger and matured his judgment. Yet, if the poetical critic had not, to some extent, reflected the popular opinion, he would not have described "the simple Wordsworth,"

"Who, both by precept and example, shows  
That prose is verse, and verse is merely prose;"

nor characterized "gentle Coleridge"

"To turgid ode and tumid stanza dear.

Southey comes off better:

"Let Southey sing, although his teeming muse,  
Prolific every spring, be too profuse."

It may be consolatory to neglected poets to know, that the two greatest of the Lake Poets have won their freshest laurels from a generation that succeeded the doubters and scoffers of their early period. It was not merely the dull and the acrimonious who spoke slightly of Wordsworth and Coleridge, even as recently as 1811. Leigh Hunt, in most cases a generous critic, in his "Feast of the Poets" makes Apollo look pleased upon "Bob Southey;" but Apollo "turned without even a look" for the "three or four others" who had entered with him:

"For Coleridge had vexed him long since, I suppose,  
By his idling, and gabbling, and muddling in prose;  
And as to that Wordsworth! he'd been so benursh,  
Second childhood with him had come close on the first."\*

Apollo having cried, "Laurels for four," the honoured guests of the God are Campbell, Southey, Scott, and Moore. Crabbe is to be recreated "down-stairs:"

"And let him have part of what goes from the table."

Wordsworth had appeared as a writer of verse in 1793. The first volume of the "Lyrical Ballads" was published in 1798. In the second volume, published in 1800, he was associated with Coleridge. Of "Joan of Arc," the first poem which Southey gave to the world, in 1796, a portion was contributed by Coleridge. The relative value of the three friends, as poets, has been somewhat differently adjudged in the present time from the early estimate of their peculiar powers. Southey, the most voluminous, is now little read, and has certainly not produced an enduring influence upon our poetical literature. Coleridge, who, of the trio, has written the smaller amount of verse, is generally held to be the most exquisite artist, although least fitted to be popular. Wordsworth—described by Hazlitt as the most original poet living; but one whose writings were not read by the vulgar, not understood by the learned, despised by the great, and ridiculed by the fashionable—lived to see his writings universally read by learned, great, fashionable, and even "the vulgar." His power was slowly won, but it was enduring; for he looked beyond the classes that were once deemed to be alone sufficiently elevated for the purposes of didactic or descriptive verse. The great objection to his writings was, "the wilfulness with which he persists in choosing his examples of intellectual dignity and tenderness exclusively from the lowest ranks of society." The Edinburgh Reviewer wanted Mr. Wordsworth, "instead of confining himself almost entirely to the society of the dale-men, and cottagers, and little children, who form the subjects of his book, to condescend to mingle a little more with the people who were to read and judge of it."† The poet had his reward in the fact that the exceptional class of the lower ranks became his readers and admirers. He survived till the era of diffused education.

It was the complaint of the author of "English Bards," that a new reading public had arisen to buy books according to their own tastes.

\* We quote from the first edition of this clever poem, published in "The Reflector."

† Jeffrey's "Essays," vol. ii. p. 508.

"Each country book-club bows the knee to Baal,  
And, hurling lawful genius from the throne,  
Erects a shrine and idol of its own."

It was a grievance, that out of this new demand authors were to be paid at a rate far beyond that of the exclusive periods of the commerce of literature. For this was Byron indignant in his days of innocence, when he could spurn Scott as "Apollo's venal son," deeming it a sin against the dignity of verse that the booksellers had agreed to pay for "Marmion" at the rate of "half-a-crown a line." In a year or two Byron was as greedy a worshipper of the "stern Mammon" as any "hireling bard." The Circulating Library and the Book Club had, to some extent, superseded the comparatively small number of private book-buyers. To this more numerous body of readers did the publishers of "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," of "Marmion," of "The Lady of the Lake," and of Scott's other romances in verse, address themselves, when they reprinted his inconveniently splendid and dear quartos in more modest and cheaper octavos. "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" was published in 1805, and "Marmion" in 1808. Byron designated these poems as "stale romance." With them commenced the new era of narrative poetry, which has almost wholly superseded the merely didactic and descriptive orders of verse, and which is not incompatible with the most refined and most subtle revelations of poetical feeling. Never was a greater mistake than the designation of Scott's narrative poems as "stale romance." He had the most ample knowledge of all the romances of chivalry, and especially of the legendary lore of his native land. His critical devotion to this most seductive of the pursuits of antiquarianism was exhibited in his "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border," originally published in 1802 and 1803. The young Edinburgh Advocate had previously cultivated an acquaintance with the Literature of Germany, of which new well of thought and diction other poets were drinking so freely. But he saw at home a waste ground of imagination ready for profitable culture. The quaint and sometimes tedious simplicity of the old romance was to be superseded by a rush of easy and glowing narrative which the imperfectly cultivated mind could enjoy; and of which the critical faculty could scarcely deny the charm, however it might sneer at mountain spirits and river sprites, the goblin page and the wizard's grave. There are two critical notices of Scott's Poems, reprinted in juxtaposition by their accomplished author, which sufficiently indicate the triumphs which Scott had achieved in a few years. That on "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," written in 1805, concludes thus:

"The locality of the subject is likely to obstruct its popularity; and the author, by confining himself in a great measure to the description of manners and personal adventures, has forfeited the attraction which might have been derived from the delineation of rural scenery."\* The critique on "The Lady of the Lake," written 1810, opens thus: "Mr. Scott, though living in an age remarkably prolific of original poetry, has manifestly outstripped all his competitors in the race of popularity, and stands already upon a height to which no other writer has attained in the memory of any one now alive." †

The popularity of Walter Scott as a narrative poet was equalled, if not exceeded, by that of lord Byron, when he reluctantly turned from satire and the comparatively tame Cantos I. and II. of "Childe Harold," to write verse Romances, of which the scenes were Oriental, and the heroes were modelled from his own likeness. Byron was almost universally held as the first of living poets. There were some, it is true, who doubted the reasonableness of the universal homage; some who ascribed his extraordinary fame to causes of a more temporary and artificial nature than the power of his genius; who thought that the multiplication of his own portrait was no indication of a real knowledge of the human heart; who upheld the faith that a truly great poet could not be impressed with the grandeur and beauty of the external world without an abiding sense of the Creator's presence, nor could survey mankind in the spirit of an insane contempt of his country, and of malignant hatred of classes and individuals amongst whom he had lived. In the poem which, considered in a merely literary point of view, is his greatest production, "Don Juan" is the intensification of the sensual attributes of the poet's own character dressed up with marvellous ability for no other end than to dazzle and corrupt. A higher taste, and a more prevalent sense of decency, has done more to consign this poem to partial neglect than lord Eldon's refusal to give it the protection of the law of copyright. One of the most popular of our living novelists has depicted an East Indian officer, who, having returned, after a long absence to his native country, quite unfamiliar with the more recent judgments of English society on matters of literature, is scandalized at the critical opinions of his son's friends—opinions which were not of colonel Newcome's time. What! Lord Byron not one of the greatest poets of the world? Sir Walter a poet of the second order! That reverence for Mr. Wordsworth, what did it mean? Mr. Keats, and the young Mr. Tennyson of Cambridge, the chief of modern poets!

\* Jeffrey's "Essays," vol. ii. p. 236.

† *Ibid.*, p. 237.

Such were the mutations of opinion between the last years of King George III. and the first years of Queen Victoria.

Whilst Byron was in the full blaze of his reputation, and Wordsworth was slowly establishing an enduring influence upon the popular mind, two young poets appeared, who, for a time, had to endure as much obloquy and neglect as ordinarily falls to the lot of intrusive mediocrity. In 1812, at the age of twenty, Shelley printed his "Queen Mab." In 1821 he was drowned in the Mediterranean. In these ten years of a feverish and often unhappy existence, he produced a body of poetry "remarkable for its quantity, but much more wonderful for the quality of the greater part of it."\* Few were his contemporary admirers. He was denounced and dreaded. At war with many of the institutions of society; an unbeliever in Christianity, but with a vague belief of an over-ruling power, and of the soul's immortality; his rash opinions, confirmed by something like persecution; it was reserved for another age to understand the rare qualities of his genius. Shelley has been called "the poet of poets." His highest excellences are scarcely capable of rousing enthusiasm in ordinary readers, now that he is read. Keats published two volumes of Poems in 1817; his third volume appeared a few months before his death in 1821. The inspiration of Keats, like that of Shelley, was fitted to attract fervent votaries, but only amongst a comparatively small class—those "of imagination all compact." The narrative facility of Scott, the splendid declamation of Byron, were elements of popularity which were wanting in these masters of a subtler art.

The narrative character, by which a great portion of the verse of this period had established its hold upon the popular mind, was now adopted by writers whose earlier productions were more in conformity with the tastes of a generation passing away. Campbell had a wider reputation than any contemporary at the beginning of the century, created by his "Pleasures of Hope" and his noble lyrics. In 1809, he produced "Gertrude of Wyoming." Rogers appeared to revive from a sleep of twenty years, when, in 1814, he published "Jaqueline," in connection with the "Lara" of Byron. His "Pleasures of Memory" appeared in 1792. He returned to his characteristic style in the "Italy" of 1822. Leigh Hunt, whose juvenile Poems appeared in 1802, and whose poetical faculty had been subsequently displayed in graceful verse, light or serious, in 1816 took his place amongst the narrative poets by his "Story of Rimini." Moore, the wittiest of satirists, the most elegant of song-writers, published "Lalla Rookh" in 1817. Crabbe,—who,

\* Craik, "English Literature," vol. ii. p. 496.